

# EARLY HORTICULTURAL JOURNALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

BY JAMES GRIMSHAW SCOTT

*Germantown, Pennsylvania*

“Time consecrates and what is gray with age becomes Religion.”

On the authority of our most accurate Germantown historian, Edwin C. Jellett, we have it that the pioneer horticultural journal was the *Florist and Horticultural Journal* founded in Philadelphia in 1852 by R. Robinson Scott.

In presenting to you the facts of the beginning of horticultural journalism in these United States, I have taken the stated “text” from the pages of the Philadelphia *Florist and Horticultural Journal*, the first issue of which came from the press in April, 1852, and the publication of which was suspended in 1855, having run through part of that year.

Explaining the suspension of publication, the editor printed the following: “The only apology we have to make for our suspension, to those of our subscribers who paid us promptly their subscriptions, is, that a greater number have not paid and some, perhaps many, do not intend to pay.”

This shows that the *Journal* was an indigenous one—not an exotic, as the circulation editor of a journal of any kind to-day will advise you that this condition of the finances is normal throughout the country. We must not censure the delinquents for the state of affairs entirely, for the publication is often thrust upon them by the importunities of the publishers and the charm of the journal so grips the reader that he is loth to cancel his subscription even when he has no funds with which to pay for it.

This period, say from 1850 to 1860, seems to have been the golden age of horticulture in the United States and the storm area extended from Massachusetts to Maryland, where many earnest workers were engaged in planting the wilderness and encouraging the remainder of the country to cultivate the soil.

To the publishers of this pioneer horticultural magazine it seemed a necessity to have an organ devoted entirely to botany, horticulture and pomology and of this necessity the Philadelphia *Florist and Horticultural Journal* was born. At the time of its first appearance there were journals that "dabbled" in the news of the farm and garden but this was the first strictly horticultural and agricultural journal to be attempted in the New World.

New York too, at this time, had her horticultural dreams and ambitions and one of the first secretaries of a New York Horticultural Society was George William Curtis.

Hon. Marshall P. Wilder of Massachusetts, no doubt a kinsman of our late beloved Prince of Entertainers, "Little Marsh," seems to have held the New England front. The Honorable Nicholas Longworth, of Ohio, was the active spirit in the horticulture of the then far western limit of activity.

On the last page of the last issue of the Philadelphia *Florist and Horticultural Journal*, we find notes of three other contemporary journals, namely, the *Western Agriculturist*, published in Pittsburgh; the *Homestead*, published in Hartford, Conn.; and the *Pennsylvania Farm Journal*, published in Philadelphia by Messrs. Samuel Emlen & Co. and edited by David Wells and A. M. Spangler. Samuel Emlen still survives in our Germantown and he of all others was the most helpful spirit in encouraging these early garden publications. It was he who, with the late John Jay Smith, steadied the hand of the editor and proprietor of the pioneer *Florist and Horticultural Journal*, applauding him when he ran, lifting him when he fell, and enabling him honorably to proceed with the work which made a place for the *Journal* and blazed the way for those that followed. From that early time till now the United States has been benefited by the stimulus of splendid horticultural journals until at the present time we find that flowers and fruits, deified by the refined ancients under the titles of Flora and Pomona, have unseated Jove, who grasped with mailed hand the thunderbolts of Heaven; and to-day, passing the City Hall of Philadelphia, we read the inspiring announcement, "Food will win the war—don't waste it."

Reared then in the atmosphere of the stoke-hole among the tobacco stems and grafting twine in the caboose at the end of the

greenhouse, we are pleased to salute the pagan deities Pomona and Flora and brush impatiently aside all other fabulous personifications.

This pioneer horticultural journalist was besides the pioneer fern student of the United States and his memory has been kept green by those beloved publications, the *Fern Bulletin* and its successor, the *American Fern Journal*, in whose pages may be read the enchanting history of *Asplenium ebenoides* R. R. Scott, one of the most noted of the world's ferns.

It gives me great pleasure to revive the memory of the early *Journal* and in the brief time at my disposal, I cannot refer to the splendid magazines that have succeeded it until to-day we are in possession of the crowning effort in that distinguished quarterly, the *Addisonia* of the New York Botanical Garden.

The memory that endures is the consecrated shrine of the historian and the Greek statue of antique time is of greater value than the whole of Manhattan Island!